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Burning questions

Volunteers will go door-to-door for fire safety campaign
Page 3

Making a comeback

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POCOMAR looking for volunteers



POCOMAR commander Norm Dashwood helps dock the Ted Cook during an open house held on Saturday. Please see story on page 2.

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UPFRONT

Marine rescue group needs volunteers

ALLAN BENNER

Postmedia Network

For Zach Walters, joining Port Colborne Marine Auxiliary Rescue — better known as POCOMAR — was a step towards his career in law enforcement.

"This is the absolute best for me in my career path, to say, 'Am I able to do something like that?'" said Walters, POCOMAR's executive officer.

Walters, who joined the organization about three years ago, has learned from his experiences — successfully rescuing people facing life-threatening situations on the waters of Lake Erie, coping with tragedy — that he has chosen the right career.

"It can have some high stress times, whether you're manoeuvring this vessel trying to save people in inclement weather, but at the end of the day you step back and see that the work you're doing is bigger than you," he said during an open house and orientation session Saturday.

While testing the limits of the volunteers who dedicate their free time to training and working to ensure the safety of people on the lake and its shoreline, the impact they have had is "staggering," said POCOMAR commander Norm Dashwood.

He recently calculated the direct impact the unit has had during the past seven years, since its volunteers started keeping accurate records.

In that time, POCOMAR volunteers have saved 358 lives and \$2.3 million worth of property, and responded to 214 emergency calls. Volunteers have worked 401 hours on rescue operations, spent 1,500 hours in training and 1,150 hours of community service.

By extrapolating back to the year POCOMAR started in 1988, Dashwood estimated that 1,400 lives have been saved, as well as \$12.5 million in property. Volunteers since that year, would have responded to 825 emergency calls, spent about



POCOMAR executive officer Zach Walters stands at the helm of the Donald R. Workman during an open house on Saturday.

ALLAN BENNER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

1,550 hours on rescue operations and 810 hours of training and about 5,400 hours on community service.

The Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary group is looking for new members to help them continue the work they are doing.

Dashwood said the organization is hoping to recruit about a dozen volunteers this season, adding to the 28 active volunteers on the current roster.

Dashwood said a few members have been lost due to other commitments.

While having nearly 30 volunteers isn't bad, Dashwood said the organization likes "to keep the numbers high enough that we have a significant response" to any emergency to which the volunteers are called.

"That's the important part," he said.

Very little experience is needed for recruits.

Dashwood, who is now starting his fourth year as a POCOMAR volunteer, said he knew very little about boating or rescue operations when he joined.

He said he learned about the organization during a past recruitment drive, and it fit perfectly with his interests.

"I had very little boat operating experience when I signed up. I had none all most, but I was definitely

interested," he said.

After receiving training as a POCOMAR volunteer, Dashwood bought a 30-foot cabin cruiser he described as his "floating cottage."

Walters said this year, POCOMAR's volunteers are looking forward to using new radio equipment that's being purchased with a \$25,000 grant from Port Colborne business Jungbunzlauer.

"It was much needed because we're kind of hurt-

ing in the funding department. We make do, but it was nice to be accepted for that grant, and we can replace equipment that might make a difference in saving someone's life," Walters said.

People interested in more information about volunteering can contact Walters through e-mail to executive-officer@pocomar.org.

ABenner@postmedia.com
Twitter: @Abenner1

LOCAL NEWS

Port Colborne fire safety stressed

MICHELLE ALLENBERG
Postmedia Network

Burning questions about fire safety?

Port Colborne fire prevention officer Scott Lawson wants to make sure they are answered and people stay safe.

Volunteers will go door-to-door today for the city's smoke alarm campaign. They will ensure buildings are up to code with the proper smoke alarms.

During a previous door-to-door check in November, fire personnel were shocked to find that about 65 per cent of the homes did not have smoke or carbon monoxide detectors.

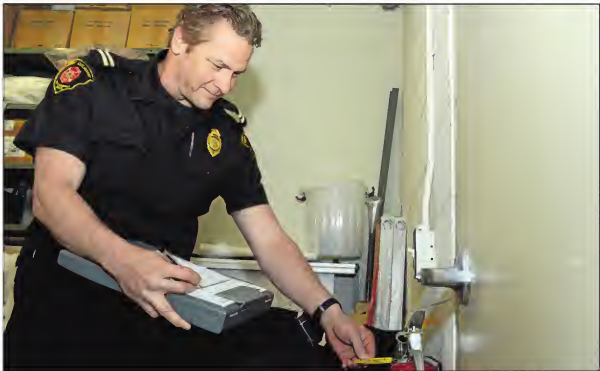
Lawson said this year there will be an even bigger push for fire safety. Part of this push was visiting schools to speak to almost 2,000 students about fire safety, including creating fire escape routes.

Lawson stressed the importance of having working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

He said they are imperative in making sure people escape alive. When it comes to safety, the owner of a building is responsible for installing smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. In larger buildings fire personnel will ensure stairwells and doors are functioning properly without any obstructions.

"At the end of the day, that is your personal safety, so you should be aware of what is going on in case your landlord isn't," Lawson said.

Last Tuesday Port Colborne



Port Colborne fire Capt. Terry Czerlau checks the tag on a fire extinguisher at the fire hall on Kiltaly Street.

MICHELLE ALLENBERG/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

fighters began their in-service inspection program, which utilizes the on-duty firefighters. Lawson said the program will increase productivity and fire safety within the community.

"What we have done is send some guys to do online courses through the winter to

get them up to snuff. Our main target right now is multi-residential. That is where we feel our greatest threat is," Lawson said.

Multi-residential housing is a building that has three or more units. Lawson said this is where people cook, live and sleep and the Fire and Emer-

gency Services of Port Colborne wants to make sure everyone is safe.

Right now, Lawson said all the fire department can handle are complaints and requests, but it is working to become more proactive.

"We want to get out and make a more active approach,"

Lawson said.

During today's inspection if a residence is found without the proper smoke and carbon monoxide detectors there won't be a fine.

"If anyone does have any concerns contact us at the fire hall."

"There are lots of ways to

get a hold of us, and we will follow up on any complaint or request," Lawson said.

For more information or to contact the fire hall at 905-834-4512 or visit the Port Colborne Fire and Emergency Services page on Facebook.

Mallenber@postmedia.ca

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Fencing alongside the Welland Canal near Main Street East in Port Colborne.

MICHELLE ALLENBERG/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Canal fencing called an eyesore

MICHELLE ALLENBERG
Postmedia Network

The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corp. is nearing completion of fence installation along the Welland Canal in Port Colborne.

The installation began in March and is about 90 per cent complete.

For Port Colborne residents and city council, the fencing is seen as an eyesore. During last week's city council meeting Ward 4 Coun. Barbara Butters brought up the issue and said the canal is a tourist sight and a "must-see attraction."

She referred to a staff report that indicated tourism contributes more than \$2.5 billion to Niagara's overall

economy annually. Staff compiled the report because council is concerned how the fencing will impact tourism in Port Colborne.

Council members agreed at the meeting there needed to be a change to the fencing. The city will ask the Seaway and Transport Canada to make adjustments to any fencing or other non-operational or non-mandated structures.

Port Colborne would like to see the fencing "replaced with great thought and attention to aesthetic detail," municipal staff said in the report.

"Anyone who drives along Welland Street can see it is kind of like being fenced in and reminds you of a prison yard. We shouldn't have to see that," Ward 2 Coun. Angie Desmarais said.

The Seaway has to follow guidelines to ensure marine safety. Andrew Bogora, Seaway communications officer, said in an interview Wednesday. He said the fencing is related to the marine security.

Bogora said after 9/11 federal safety legislation evolved over the years and it continues to evolve. The Seaway must comply with regulations.

"We understand that these changes can be disconcerting after many years of witnessing relatively 'open access' to some areas of the Welland Canal," the Seaway said in a news release.

The Seaway said the security is a reflection of the "difficult times" after 9/11, adding this is just one of many security measures being taken by Transport Canada to ensure public safety.

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LOCAL NEWS

Dirt bike rider injures leg in off-road crash



ALLAN BOWEN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Welland firefighters and Niagara Emergency Medical Services paramedics carry an injured man to safety after his dirt bike crashed along railway tracks near the Canal Bank Street overpass at about 6:30 p.m. last Thursday. The unidentified man sustained an injury to his leg.

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The walking dead and the CAO

You have to hand it to Niagara's regional councillors. If they are anything, they're consistent. You know. In the same way Wife E. Coyote was consistent. You may recall the Region's top bureaucrat chief administrative officer Harry Schlangé is on his way out. He quit his post to take the CAO job in the troubled municipality of Brampton.

Schlangé's departure has left a cloud hanging over the council. His resignation letter, which became public, was pointedly critical of it.

Schlangé believed the Region was making progress on important fronts for a time. However, he wrote, this work was undermined "by actions and behaviours at the leadership level that run contrary to these efforts and inhibit my ability to continue to deliver on the commitments I have made to you."

Unless council's leadership changes direction, he wrote,



"this situation will lead to an organization where roles are reinforced, processes are more important than results and credibility for our organization declines."

To date, council and its leading members, notably Chairman Alan Caslin, have declined to comment on Schlangé's letter.

At this point, council's silence is completely inescapable.

The optics of Schlangé's departure are lousy, and council's refusal to address his criticisms in a public forum wounds Niagara's ability to attract talented people.

Both the voting public in Niagara and potential CAOs elsewhere need to have some confidence that council takes

Schlangé's opinions seriously and is doing something to address them.

(Caslin had that opportunity at his state of the region address, but chose to avoid the issue entirely.)

If councillors believe Schlangé's concerns are without merit, they need to explain as much to the public.

As it happens, there is an upcoming opportunity to meet these issues head on and help restore some confidence in local politics.

But like the characters of *The Walking Dead*, who consistently choose the absolute worst option available, they are going to do the opposite of that.

Schlangé was scheduled to address council in closed session when he resigned, but that council meeting got bogged down in a long and unproductive debate over an inane request from Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority for political support to transplant wetlands in

Niagara Falls. He did not get the opportunity to speak.

On Thursday, council voted to allow Schlangé to address them in a sort of exit interview May 19. They also voted to hold this session in secret.

The official excuse is that this is a personnel matter and therefore not open to public discussion.

This reason might hold some water if Schlangé's resignation letter wasn't already a matter of public record.

No matter how much some councillors might wish it, the genie cannot be put back in the bottle. Holding a closed-door meeting will only further entrench the idea that there's something rotten in the halls of Schomberg Parkway.

I am going to say something here, and you may want to sit down for a moment before I do.

You've been warned.

Yes, this exit interview. Catharines councillor Andy

Petrowski is right.

I know, I know. I actually feel a little icky writing that, but facts are facts.

At this point in his political career, Petrowski is essentially a walking, talking Internet comment section. But when he calls this secret meeting a disservice to Niagara residents, he is absolutely on the money.

During Thursday's council meeting, he questioned the need for an exit interview with Schlangé, but suggested if it was going to be done, it should be done in public.

How else, he said, would the public know what made Schlangé so unhappy with his station that he decided to move elsewhere?

He might also have pointed out Niagara citizens won't know how council will respond to these concerns, and any potential replacement CAO will cast a wary eye upon the region.

Yes, this exit interview will be tense and possibly

embarrassing for some. But we already know of the longstanding tensions between Caslin and Schlangé, so the potential for those grievances being aired is no reason to hide behind closed doors.

This iteration of regional council has often behaved as though it has an acute allergy to transparency and accountability. This behaviour has deeply wounded council's credibility with the people it serves.

These councillors now have an opportunity, perhaps the last one for a long time to come, to prove to citizens that accountability is not just a buzzword but a political perspective they believe in.

Regional council must reverse course and make the meeting with Schlangé open to the public.

Failure to do so will say more about them than anything else they have done to date.

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Three arrested in drug bust

Three people were arrested in Port Colborne last Thursday after a Niagara Regional Police drug investigation. Police say the three suspects were arrested in the parking lot

of a Main Street East building, as a result of their investigation into the sale of illegal drugs in the Welland and Port Colborne area by a "mobile drug dealer." Police also searched a home

on West Side Road in Port Colborne and seized \$2,870 in suspected cocaine, \$400 in marijuana and psilocybin (a hallucinogenic drug), and \$4,195 in currency.

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Going through hoops for a good cause

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The thought of running an obstacle course is enough to make most adults get more comfy on the couch.

But four- to 13-year-olds? There's a good chance they'll say bring it

on, especially if they're among the hundreds who have already signed up for the 2016 Kids Ultimate Challenge on Sunday, June 5.

Not only will they take on mud puddles, hurdles, mountains of hay, and go through hoops along a one-kilometre course through Burgoyne Woods in St. Catharines, they'll also raise thousands of dollars for the Niagara Health System's Children's Health Unit.

In short, it's kids helping kids, and OneFoundation for Niagara Health System knows there's no



SUPPLIED PHOTO

Getting muddy is a welcome mess for challengers.



SUPPLIED PHOTO

A sea of kids burst out of the start line to begin the 1km obstacle course.

one better for the job than a few hundred young philanthropists.

Participants in the non-competitive event, modelled after the infamous Tough Mudder obstacle race, have raised more than \$76,000 since the first Kids Ultimate Challenge three years ago. Last year's top fundraiser alone raised \$2,700.

"These are kids," Elyse Howarth, OneFoundation communications specialist, said about the remarkable amount of money raised. "The Kids Ultimate Challenge not only promotes healthy, active play for kids, it also instills philanthropy in our participants, encouraging the notion of giving back from a young age."

And having fun while doing it. Participants climb, run, jump, and crawl through a dozen obstacles, including the most infamous: the mud pit. Many of the white t-shirts participants are given at the start of the event are worn as

grass- and mud-stained badges of honour at the end. After all, sometimes the best part is not making it through every obstacle unscathed.

"Some of them make it over it, some of them don't," Howarth said with a laugh. "Our slogan is a day of mud, sweat and cheers."

Those cheers aren't just coming from spectators. They're coming from Children's Health Unit patients and staff.

Thanks to participants' efforts, the unit has been able to purchase an incubator transport stretcher, two cribs, and a vascular imaging system that uses infrared light to enable staff to more easily find the veins of young patients requiring an IV or blood work.

"Babies and children can have small and intricate veins, so starting IV's on them can be very difficult for the doctors and nurses. At times, the IV may need to be attempted several times, which causes more discomfort and stress

for the child," explained Carol Munro, clinical manager of the children's health unit. "This piece of equipment greatly benefits the children who are patients at our hospital."

OneFoundation hopes to have 850 children — another sellout crowd — participate this year. Aside from the obstacle course, Kids Ultimate Challenge features a fun zone with inflatables, a barbecue and crafts.

So far, more than 600 have registered, attesting to the popularity of a day dedicated to families having fun for a good cause.

"It's completely blown up as kids have found out about it," Howarth said. "It's a really great family day. It's literally a sea of kids running with smiles on their faces and that makes it all worth it."

To learn more or to register, visit kidsultimatechallenge.com



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Grandfather jailed six months for fraud

TONY RICCIUTO
Postmedia Network

If a castle in Scotland really had existed, some Niagara residents might have been able to recover more than just \$100 a month from a con artist who took them for thousands of dollars.

Turns out there was no castle and Robert Rawlings has

never been a multimillionaire or had any type of business interests in Fonthill, Beamsville, Peterborough, Quebec, Florida or the Cayman Islands. Those were some of the tales Rawlings told potential investors before taking their money.

The 70-year-old grandfather, who lives in Beamsville and actually worked as a mechanic

servicing heavy equipment machinery before his retirement, has been sentenced to six months in jail.

Rawlings appeared for sentencing last Thursday in Ontario Court of Justice in St. Catharines before Judge Ann Watson.

During an earlier court appearance, Rawlings pleaded guilty to three charges of fraud,

two of which were more than \$5,000, and one count under \$5,000.

On May 29, 2013, one couple from St. Catharines transferred \$39,550 that they wanted to have invested. The money was diverted through various accounts and there was no proof that any of the funds were ever invested.

A man from Parry Sound

invested and lost \$5,556 in what he thought was a transmission shop. That offence took place between December 2012 and February 2013.

Another victim, a man from Burlington, asked Rawlings to invest \$540, which he gave him in U.S. currency. When the man asked for a receipt, the accused claimed he didn't have one at the time. The money was never invested.

Assistant Crown Attorney Gabrielle Settimi said the joint submission of a six-month jail sentence was at the lower end of the range for this type of offence, but a guilty plea was

entered which saved court time, and the accused's age and medical issues were taken into account.

The judge said the total loss was \$46,150 and the accused is not in a position to make restitution.

Rawlings retired last year and is now working as a labourer for \$11 an hour.

In addition to the six months in jail, Rawlings has been placed on probation for three years. Once he is released from jail, he must pay \$100 a month in restitution during the three years while on probation, for a total of \$3,600.

NOTICE OF A PROPOSED CHANGE TO A RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECT

Project Name: Niagara Region Wind Farm

Renewable Energy Approval: 4353-GHMP2R

IESO Reference Number: F-001580-WTN-139-001

Project Location: The Niagara Region Wind Farm (the "Project") is located within Haldimand County and Niagara Region (including the townships of Wainfleet and West Lincoln and the Town of Lincoln). The electrical interconnect components are located within the Town of Lincoln and the Township of West Lincoln, in Niagara Region, and in Haldimand County in southern Ontario.

Dated At: Haldimand County and Niagara Region on this 4th day of May, 2016.

Niagara Region Wind Corporation ("NRWC") was issued a Renewable Energy Approval (REA) on November 6, 2014 in respect of the Niagara Region Wind Farm project (the "project"). Information with respect to the decision on this project can be viewed on the Environmental Registry by searching EBR #012-0613. An amendment to the existing approval for an administrative change to the Project was issued by the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) on November 23, 2015; to acknowledge the

change in ownership of the Project from "Niagara Region Wind Corporation" to "FWRN LP, as FWRN LP has purchased the Project (EBR #012-5532). FWRN LP is proposing to make changes to the project and the project itself is subject to the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act of Ontario (Act) Part V.0.1 and Ontario Regulation 359/09 (Regulation). In accordance with Section 16.0.1 of the Regulation this notice is being published to make the public aware of proposed changes to the project.

Project Description and Proposed Change
Pursuant to the Act and Regulation, the facility, in respect of which the REA was issued, is considered to be a Class A Wind Facility. An application has been made to the MOECC to change the project and alter the terms and conditions of the existing REA. The proposed change consists of a project design change to the REA Application and includes adding a new modified alternate transmission line route around the Town of Smithville to avoid areas proposed for future urban expansion.

Documents for Public Inspection
FWRN LP has developed a Modification Document which summarizes the proposed change. A written copy of the Modification Document is currently available for public inspection on the project website (<http://www.nrwf.ca/projectdocuments/>). Copies of the final REA documents also remain available on the project website.

Project Contacts and Information:
To learn more about the project, or to communicate questions or comments, please contact:

Project Email Address: info@nrwf.ca

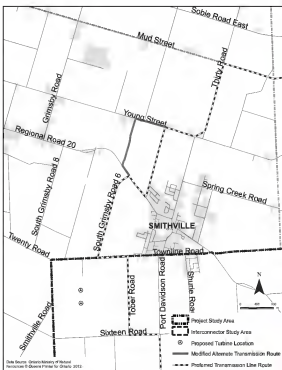
Project Website: <http://www.nrwf.ca>

Project Phone Number: 819-363-6491 or

1-844-363-6491 (toll free)

Shilah Berriman, Project Coordinator
FWRN LP
4672 Bartlett Road South
Beamsville, ON L3R 1B1

J.A. (AJ) Leggett, BA, MCIP, RPP, Project Manager
Stantec Consulting Ltd.
300 - 675 Cochrane Drive West Tower
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See Source: Smithville-Wainfleet Interconnector & Wind Farm Project (2012)

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Regional councillors to be re-seated by draw

It's no game of musical chairs, but councillors will soon have new seating assignments around the regional horseshoe.

While council members have assigned seats in the chamber, Niagara Falls Coun. Bob Gale felt occasionally switching seats will allow for councillors to better get to know one another.

"I'm hoping the first speaker on this will call the question, so we don't waste any time on this," he said, after bringing a motion forward in a special meeting last Thursday afternoon.

He felt it was a beneficial move, but didn't want it to take away from other business council had before it.

Seating arrangements will be determined by a lottery conducted by the regional clerk each May, with councillors switching seats for the month of June.

Following the meeting, Gale said the motion had nothing to do with his current seating assignment — between Fort Erie Coun. Sandy Annunziata and St. Catharines Coun. Andy Petrowski.

He said that while people may read into the request, it's nothing more than a mechanism to get to know other councillors around the horseshoe.

Preclearance area for border crossings explored

Niagara wants to host Canada's first preclearance land crossing site for commercial trucks and vehicles.

That's the message regional council hopes to send to both U.S. and Canadian governments with a resolution passed during last Thursday's special meeting.

The motion, brought forward by Fort Erie Coun. Sandy Annunziata, seeks to have a preclearance location built on Peace Bridge property.

Annunziata said the Peace Bridge Authority has the property and financial ability to construct the necessary infrastructure to allow both federal governments to implement full customs preclearance.

Both governments have expressed interest in expanding preclearance locations in Canada, he added.

The initiative would reduce delays and increase efficiencies, which will benefit the economies of southern Ontario and western New York, Annunziata said.

It's an initiative the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce has been working on for seven years, in collaboration with other local chambers and the Niagara Industrial Association, said St. Catharines Mayor Walter Sankilä.

"It's important for us to move forward very quickly on this,"

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Rescued Mastiff fills out with love

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

Minnie has gone from deathly skinny to robustly husky in just a year.

And eating has become a favourite pastime, reports her new foster owners Red and Melissa Reitz.

On March 4, 2015, the French Mastiff was about half her normal weight — her ribs jutting into her

coat — when she was picked up at large near Niagara and Scott streets in St. Catharines.

Months of TLC have turned everything around for Minnie.

"She has been fantastic and a

blessing in disguise," says Melissa, as with that her husband nods and smiles as he scratches Minnie's head.

Red says Minnie took to her new home with ease, since moving in at the end of May 2015.

"She was acting very much like 'Hey — this is my place,'" says Red with a laugh. "Minnie sort of adopted us, we didn't adopt her."

"Minnie likes a good massage with a belly rub and all the joints."

On a Thursday visit outside the home of her Oakdale Avenue-area owners, Minnie is seen enthusiastically scarfing on "sensitive stomach" dog kibble from the palm of

Melissa.

"She's a little chunk," notes Melissa with a chuckle. "Minnie is highly food-oriented, she enjoys playing around with it."

"I know she got so skinny, it just boggles the brain."

The couple reports Minnie was recently quarantined by a vet and found to be in excellent health, if a touch heavy. When rescued last year, the dog weighed in at about half her weight, at 42.9 pounds. She's now plumped up to about 85 to 90 pounds.

That assessment is prompting a slight diet for Minnie — an active and robust pooch seen tearing around a fenced backyard. It's a welcome change of fate for the animal.

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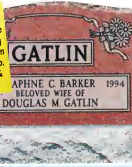
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